

Serial No. 10/821,595Docket No. 117-P-1345USD4**Remarks**

Claim 2 has been cancelled without prejudice and claims 1, 3-20 and 36 have been amended. Antecedent basis for the amendments may be found in the specification at, e.g., page 3, line 28 through page 4, line 5, page 4, line 24, page 5, lines 7-10, page 6, lines 15-17 and 24-25 and page 9, lines 14-16. Following entry of this amendment, claims 1, 3-27, 36 and 37 will be pending in this application.

Rejection of Claims 1-19 under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph as being indefinite on grounds that:

"Independent claim 1 recites that the overcoat is a "two-part curable overcoat". However, it is unclear what is meant by such a recitation. Is the overcoat already dried and cured? In which case, it is not "two-part curable". Or is the overcoat still wet and present as two distinct and uncured materials? In which case, how does one keep the intermediate coating and overcoat in distinct layers and prevent the mixing of the intermediate and overcoat layers? Such ambiguities arise given the Applicants arguments (last paragraph of page 6 of the arguments presented January 5, 2005) that "two-part curable compositions" cure shortly after the two parts are mixed together. In light of the Specification and for purposes of examination, the Examiner has treated "two-part curable" in claims 1-19 to imply an already dried and cured overcoat layer. Appropriated amendment or clarification is required." (see the Office Action at pages 2-3, numbered paragraph 2).

Applicants request reconsideration. Amended claim 1 recites a coated floor "comprising a strippable intermediate coating atop the floor and a mixed two-part curable overcoat adhered to the intermediate coating". As recited, the overcoat has been mixed but has not yet cured or hardened. Applicants request withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph rejection of claims 1 and 3-19.

Serial No. 10/821,595Docket No. 117-P-1345USD4**Rejection of Claims 1-27, 36 and 37 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)**

Claims 1-27, 36 and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Published PCT Application No. WO 98/11168 (Hamrock et al.), on grounds that:

"Hamrock et al. disclose a floor finishing system comprising a radiation curable composition and a primer composition wherein the primer composition is coatable over a substrate and the radiation curable composition is coatable thereon (Page 6, lines 25-30). The radiation curable coating comprises a polyfunctional isocyanurate and a hydroxyalkyl acrylate (Page 4, lines 21-30). A preferred monomer is shown on Page 5 and contains an aromatic group (thus meeting the limitations that the topcoat composition comprises an acrylated urethane or an aromatic urethane). The cured, coatable composition is readily strippable from the substrate when the latex primer is present (Page 7, lines 1-3). In applying the coating compositions of the invention to a suitable substrate, it is preferred that the composition be applied in a manner which creates a coating no greater than about 1.3 mm in thickness (Page 18, lines 29-31). With regards to the stripability rating limitations recited in claims 7 and 16, the Examiner takes the position that such property limitations must be inherently present in the coatings taught by Hamrock et al. given that the chemical composition of the coatings and the structure of the laminate as taught by Hamrock et al. and as claimed in the instant application is identical. All limitations of the claimed invention are either disclosed or inherent in the above reference." (see the Office Action at pages 3-4, numbered paragraph 3).

and on the further grounds that:

"On the other hand, Applicant's arguments filed on January 5, 2005 regarding the rejection of claims 1-27, 36, and 37 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hamrock et al. (WO 98/11168) have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 1-27, 36, and 37 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hamrock et al. (WO 98/11168) and submit that the Hamrock fails

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to teach a two-part curable overcoat. However, the Examiner would like to point out that the patentability of a product does not depend on its method of production. If the product is the same as or obvious from a product of the prior art, the claim is unpatentable even though the prior product was made by a different process." In re Thorpe, 777 F.2d 695, 698, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985). The structure implied by the process steps has been considered when assessing the patentability of the claims over the prior art, and the Examiner takes the position that the use of a two-part composition does not impart distinctive structural characteristics to the final product. Hence, this rejection is maintained." (see the Office Action at page 8, numbered paragraph 10).

Applicants request reconsideration. Amended article claim 1 recites a coated floor having a strippable intermediate coating atop the floor and an overcoat adhered to the intermediate coating, wherein the overcoat comprises a "mixed two-part curable composition". No such coated floor is shown in Hamrock et al. Applicants are not claiming a coated floor based on "its method of production". Claim 1 addresses the coated floor after the overcoat has been applied and before it cures or hardens. At this point the overcoat is uncured but will cure or harden on its own in a short period of time. Hamrock et al.'s UV curable composition does not harden until after it has been exposed to suitable radiation, and if not so exposed will remain in an unhardened state.

Regarding the Office Action's assertion that "the use of a two-part composition does not impart distinctive structural characteristics to the final product", the Examiner is requested to review paragraphs 9-10 in the Declaration of Robert D. P. Hei Under 37 C.F.R. §1.132 (the "Hei Declaration") filed June 30, 2004 in parent Application Serial No. 09/560,170. The Hei Declaration discusses, *inter alia*, the visible appearance of vinyl composition flooring tiles coated with a single layer of PADLOCK™ acrylic polymer floor finish and overcoated with a single layer of UV-crosslinkable 100% solids finish ("Finish 2), low viscosity UV-crosslinkable 100% solids finish (Finish 3) or two-component aqueous polyurethane composition (Finish 5). Tiles coated with the two-component curable composition exhibited

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better leveling and a better hardened finish appearance than tiles coated with the UV-crosslinkable compositions, and without exhibiting diving (uneven gloss in a laminate finish that persists after the overcoat has cured or hardened). Applicants' recited coated floors have distinctive structural characteristics. Applicants' recited strippable laminate finish kit includes a two-part curable composition not shown in Hamrock et al.

Applicants accordingly request withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection of claims 1, 3-27, 36 and 37 as being anticipated by Hamrock et al.

Rejection of Claims 1-27, 36 and 37 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and Lauer et al.

Claims 1-27, 36 and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,932,350 (Lauer et al.), on grounds that:

"Lauer et al. (US 5,932,350) disclose a method for tandem coating substrate, such as cellulosic substrates, with both highly crosslinked thermoset coatings and aqueous based coatings (Column 1, lines 1-9). The substrate may be coated first with the cured coating (ii) and then the highly crosslinked coating (i) which is preferably formed from a thermoset material that is UV curable and which before cure may be a high solids composition or a waterborne composition (Column 2, lines 31-51). The UV curable coatings, after exposure to UV radiation, produce highly crosslinked coatings. It has proved difficult to adhered water-based topcoats without the use of an intermediate coating (Column 3, lines 1-6). With regards to the stripability rating limitations recited in claims 7 and 16, the Examiner takes the position that such propel limitations must be inherently present in the coatings taught by Lauer et al. given that the chemical composition of the coatings and the structure of the laminate as taught by Lauer et al. and as claimed in the instant application is identical. All limitations of the claimed invention are either disclosed or inherent in the above reference." (See the Office Action at page 4, numbered paragraph 4).

Applicants request reconsideration. Lauer et al.'s coating (i) is said to be "highly crosslinked" and "preferably formed from a thermoset material" (see e.g., col. 2, lines 46-47) but Lauer et

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al. do not say that coating (i) "can be stripped without damaging the floor". Coatings like Lauer et al.'s coating (i) normally are permanent coatings, and are not designed to be stripped and renewed. Lauer et al.'s waterbased or aqueous coating (ii) is said to be "carbonyl functional" (see e.g., col. 3, lines 9-16) and "preferably a thermoplastic or substantially uncrosslinked copolymer when it is applied (in its uncured state) to the substrate" (see e.g., col. 4, lines 38-39) but Lauer et al. do not say that the oven-dried coating (ii) "can be stripped without damaging the floor".

Lauer et al. say that the cellulosic substrate material may be selected from wood, MDF, hardboard and particle board and used in interior furniture and home fittings (see e.g., col. 5, lines 52-57), and that for such cellulosic substrates the substrate is first coated with the highly crosslinked coating (i) and then coated with the waterbased coating (ii) (see e.g., col. 5, lines 52-62). This is the approach used in all of Lauer et al.'s working examples, in which two layers of highly crosslinked coating (i) are applied to a "Masonite type hardboard substrate", sanded and UV cured (see e.g., col. 5, lines 57-65 and col. 9, line 41 though col. 10, line 38), and then a layer of coating (ii) is applied atop coating (i) and oven-dried (see e.g., col. 10, lines 39-45). These working examples do not show or suggest a coated floor of claims 1, 5, 7, 9-11, 15 or 16 or a method of claim 31-35 for at least the reason that the oven-dried aqueous thermoplastic coating (ii) would not be "less strippable and more wear-resistant than the intermediate coating".

Lauer et al. also say that in another embodiment:

"the cellulosic material is a paper material such as may be typically used in a printing or packaging application. Here, the waterbased coating (ii) may first be applied to the substrate, such as in the form of an ink, and then the cured waterbased coating (ii) and substrate are both coated with the highly crosslinked coating" (see e.g., col. 5, line 66 through col. 6, line 4; the "(ii)" at the end of line 4 appears to be an error and may have been intended to read "(i)").

Lauer et al. do not provide any working examples showing this latter printing or packaging embodiment. However, this printing or packaging embodiment does not show or suggest a

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coated floor of claims 1, 3-19 or 36 or a strippable laminate finish kit of claims 20-27 or 37 for at least the reason that a "paper material such as may be typically used in a printing or packaging application" is not a floor.

Applicants accordingly request withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection of claims 1, 3-27, 36 and 37 as being anticipated by Lauer et al.

Rejection of Claims 1-27, 36 and 37 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and Wang et al.

Claims 1-27, 36 and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,494,707 (Wang et al.), on grounds that:

"Wang et al. disclose a resilient floor covering comprising of a resilient support surface and a resilient wear surface adhered to said support surface and comprising an underlying wear layer-based coat and an overlying wear layer top coat adhered to said wear layer basecoat (Column 3, lines 61-68). The wear layer top coat is a hard thermoset UV curable blend of acrylates (Column 4, lines 7-10). The wear layer basecoat has a thickness of 0.7 to 3.0 mils and the wear layer top coat has a thickness of 0.1 to 0.5 mils (Column 8, lines 35-45). Conventional substrate layer comprises materials typical of substrate layers found in the flooring art and include vinyl compositions (Column 9, lines 59-66). With regards to the stripability rating limitations recited in claims 7 and 16, the Examiner takes the position that such property limitations must be inherently present in the coatings taught by Wang et al. given that the chemical composition of the coatings and the structure of the laminate as taught by Wang et al. and as claimed in the instant application is identical. All limitations of the claimed invention are either disclosed or inherent in the above reference." (see the Office Action at page 5, numbered paragraph 5).

Applicants request reconsideration. Wang et al. is similar to the previously-cited Bolgiano et al. reference in that it involves a factory-applied finish (see e.g., Examples 2 through 4) for no-wax flooring (see e.g., col. 4, lines 16-20). Wang et al.'s resilient wear surface includes a wear layer base coat and wear layer top coat. Wang et al. do not say that either the wear layer

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base coat or wear layer top coat "can be stripped without damaging the floor". Wang et al. say that the wear layer base coat and wear layer top coat preferably are cross-linked sufficiently to be insoluble in certain named solvents (see e.g., col. 8, lines 62-65). Coatings like Wang et al.'s resilient wear surface normally are permanent coatings, and are not designed to be stripped and renewed.

Although Wang et al. say their wear layer base coat may be a "water based, solvent based, UV-curable or non-UV curable system" (see e.g., col. 8, line 66 through col. 9, line 1), Wang et al. make no such statement concerning their wear layer top coats. The wear layer top coats mentioned in Wang et al.'s Detailed Description and Example sections appear to be one-part 100% solids UV curable materials (see e.g., col. 8, lines 39-42, col. 9, lines 14-38, Example 5 at col. 16, lines 42-49 and Example 6 at col. 16, lines 64-67). Wang et al. do not show or suggest a coated floor of claims 1, 3-19 or 36 for at least the reason that Wang et al.'s wear layer top coat is not a "mixed two-part curable composition". Wang et al. do not show or suggest a strippable laminate finish kit of claims 20-27 or 37 for at least the reason that Wang et al.'s wear layer top coat is not a "two-part curable composition".

Applicants accordingly request withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection of claims 1, 3-27, 36 and 37 as being anticipated by Wang et al.

Rejection of claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over

Hamrock et al. in view of Koreltz et al.

Claim 21 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hamrock et al. in view of Published PCT Application No. WO 94/22965 (Koreltz et al.), on grounds that:

"Hamrock et al., as discussed above, do not state that their floor finishing system further comprises a strip agent.

"However, Koreltz et al. disclose compositions used to strip coatings such as floor finishes and/or greasy residues from surfaces such as floors and the composition is

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effective in removing multiple coatings comprising urethane/acrylic polymers (Page 1, lines 5-9 and Page 3, lines 35-37).

"Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to add the strip composition disclosed by Koreltz et al. to the floor finishing system disclosed by Koreltz et al. given that such compositions can be used to remove multiple coatings." (see the Office Action at pages 5-6, numbered paragraph 6; Applicants will assume that the last sentence of this rejection was intended to read "Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to add the strip composition disclosed by Koreltz et al. to the floor finishing system disclosed by Hamrock et al. given that such compositions can be used to remove multiple coatings.").

Applicants request reconsideration. As noted in paragraphs 11-12 of the Hei Declaration, Koreltz et al.'s stripper would not remove a single coat of Finish 1 or Finish 2, both of which were UV curable finishes. A person having ordinary skill in the resilient floor finish art would assume that Koreltz et al.'s stripping agents could not be used to remove Hamrock et al.'s UV curable finish, and would not combine Hamrock et al. and Koreltz et al. as proposed in the Office Action. Applicants accordingly request withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 (a) rejection of claim 21 as being unpatentable over Hamrock et al. in view of Koreltz et al.

**Rejection of claim 21 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over
Wang et al. in view of Koreltz et al.**

Claim 21 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Wang et al. in view of Koreltz et al., on grounds that:

"Wang et al., as discussed above, do not state that their floor finishing system further comprises a strip agent.

"However, Koreltz et al. disclose compositions used to strip coatings such as floor finishes and/or greasy residues from surfaces such as floors and the composition is

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effective in removing multiple coatings comprising urethane/acrylic polymers (Page 1, lines 5-9 and Page 3, lines 35-37).

"Accordingly, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art to add the strip composition disclosed by Koreltz et al. to the floor finishing system disclosed by Wang et al. given that such compositions can be used to remove multiple coatings." (see the Office Action at page 6, numbered paragraph 7).

Applicants request reconsideration. As noted above, Wang et al.'s wear layer top coats appear to be one-part 100% solids UV curable finishes. As shown in the Hei Declaration, Koreltz et al.'s stripper would not remove such finishes. A person having ordinary skill in the floor finish art would assume that Koreltz et al.'s stripping agents could not be used to remove Wang et al.'s wear layer top coat, and would not combine Wang et al. and Koreltz et al. as proposed in the Office Action. Applicants accordingly request withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 (a) rejection of claim 21 as being unpatentable over Wang et al. in view of Koreltz et al.

Conclusion

The recited overcoat in claims 1 and 3-19 has been mixed but has not yet cured or hardened. The 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph rejection of these claims could be withdrawn.

Hamrock et al. uses a 100% solids radiation curable overcoat. Applicants have shown that a two-part curable topcoat can provide a laminate finish exhibiting better leveling, a better final appearance and an absence of diving compared to a laminate finish formed from a one-part 100% solids UV curable topcoat. Applicants' recited coated floors have distinctive structural characteristics. Applicants' recited strippable laminate finish kit includes a two-part curable composition not shown in Hamrock et al. Hamrock does not anticipate coated floor claims 1, 3-19 or 36, or strippable laminate finish kit claims 20-27 or 37.

Lauer et al. refer to but do not exemplify an embodiment in which a waterbased coating (ii) is applied to "paper material such as may be typically used in a printing or packaging application", cured, and coated with a highly crosslinked coating (i). This printing

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or packaging embodiment does not show or suggest a coated floor of claims 1, 3-19 or 36 or a strippable laminate finish kit of claims 20-27 or 3 for at least the reason that a "paper material such as may be typically used in a printing or packaging application" is not a floor.

Wang et al. say their wear layer base coat may be a "water based, solvent based, UV-curable or non-UV curable system" but make no such statement concerning their wear layer top coats which appear to be one-part 100% solids UV curable materials. Wang et al. do not show or suggest a coated floor of claims 1, 3-19 or 36 or a strippable laminate finish kit of claims 20-27 or 37 for at least the reason that Wang et al.'s wear layer top coat is not a mixed two-part curable composition.

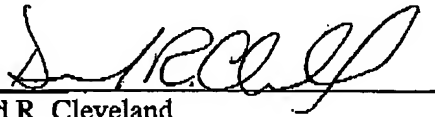
A person having ordinary skill in the resilient floor finish art would know that Koreltz et al.'s stripping agents could not be used to remove Hamrock et al.'s one part 100% solids UV curable finish, and would not combine Hamrock et al. and Koreltz et al. as proposed in the Office Action. The proposed combination of Hamrock et al. and Koreltz et al. would not make obvious the strippable laminate finish kit of claim 21. For similar reasons, the proposed combination of Wang et al. and Koreltz et al. would not make obvious the strippable laminate finish kit of claim 21.

Withdrawal of the rejections and passage of the application to the issue branch are requested. The Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned attorney at 612-331-7412 to discuss any unresolved questions regarding this application.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of
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